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14 May 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Historical Staff

SUBJECT : History of the Clandestine Services,
a Preliminary Appraisal of the
Problem

1. This memorandum is addressed to the problem of file research which would be required for the preparation of a general history of the Clandestine Services or as a basis for any more specialized historical study of a particular era, function or geographical area. It is based upon a survey, necessarily incomplete and imprecise, of filed material available for such research.

2. Quite aside from the more obvious factors inhibiting the preparation of history covering a highly classified and compartmented organization and its activities, a number of other troublesome problems emerge upon inquiry. They include:

a. The would-be chronicler today must start from a foundation of nearly 18 years of virtual neglect in the historical field; there has been no systematic effort, and very little effort of any description, to produce or prepare for the production of a history of CIG-CIA secret activities abroad or of the organizational components erected to carry them out.

b. Certain aspects of the clandestine components have been treated in existing histories of CIG-CIA through 1953, but almost always in contexts where such mention was necessary to frame or to fill in accounts of other matters; prior historians were explicitly barred from dealing with the Clandestine Services per se; some partial historical studies have been done for particular purposes but these are of limited value for serious historical research.

c. For the most part, existing files are haphazardly organized and inadequately indexed; they are not archives in any acceptable sense of that term.

3. Three general categories of files are pertinent to Clandestine Services history: (a) those which presumably have been purged of extraneous material (but not of valuable papers) and retired to Records Integration Division Central Records here or to the [REDACTED] (b) special

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purpose files intended for ready reference, and (c) files of whatever other description, not retired but held in the possession of the several Clandestine Services components.

4. The first category is of most interest and potential usefulness for the historian concerned with the period prior to about 1 January 1961. It also poses the knottiest problems. The great bulk of these files have been thrown together by file clerks or junior officers with little apparent substantive discrimination. A few are well organized and of uniformly good quality. Most contain some useful papers intermingled with a preponderance of junk. Some are junk from start to finish. The indexing (or shelf-listing) ranges from barely illuminating to outright misleading.

a. Item: A two-inch-thick file folder labelled "DCI-FBI Correspondence" consists almost entirely of mutual platitudes.

b. Item: Another two-inch folder labelled "DDP Correspondence," containing useful and useless material in approximately equal parts, has been put together totally without reference to subject matter; it was retired from the O/DCI Executive Registry.

25X1A c. Item: The ribbon copy of a personally dictated and interesting memorandum of conversation between Allen Dulles and Madam Chiang Kai-shek is filed in the [REDACTED], without 25X1A relationship to anything else therein.

d. Item: Solemnly entombed at [REDACTED] are two folders labelled "Parking Permits, 1956-57" (I couldn't bear to look).

e. Item: Twenty-five folders are carefully shelf-listed as "Correspondence on Personalities and Subjects not Applicable to Any of Foregoing Titles."

25X1A And so on. Give or take a few hundred, there are 12,000 cubic feet of these materials in storage on retirement from the DDP area. At a rough estimate, another 8,000 cubic feet of paper retired by other components may be guessed to have pertinence to the Clandestine Services. (Total storage at [REDACTED] was 81,497 cubic feet the day I was there; capacity is 90,660.)

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5. The second category of files presents the least difficulty for the practical reason that they have been filed by responsible officers who need them in their business. Examples are the publications files in [redacted] office and the Special Group agenda-minutes in CA Staff. Because they are adequately indexed and available for ready reference, their bulk is inconsequential. Alone, however, they would suffice only for a bare-bones chronological log and they are not reliable before 1953. (Another example might be the 201 personality files, but these are maintained for CICE purposes and have little relevance to our work.)

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6. Except for special studies in depth, such as Ken [redacted], the third category is not of immediate research concern to us unless we wish to risk writing our history from the present backwards. Most of these papers are evanescent and comprehensible only to their present guardians. Our main concern with them should be to take a few practical steps to ensure that their residue does not become the bane of some luckless wight tossed to the task of making historical sense of them 18 years hence.

7. The job of winnowing the wheat from the chaff of the retired files will be time-consuming and largely drudgery, but not impossible if the authorities want it done. From my own limited whirl at it, I would estimate that a fairly rapid, discriminating reader could plow through them at an average rate of about one cubic foot per day. The figure of 20,000 (12,000 plus 8,000) cubic feet could probably be halved by risking perusal of the shelf lists only. Another 5,000 might be disposed of fairly quickly by skimpy scanning. That would leave 5,000 cubic feet requiring serious reading which would work out to roughly 20 person-years. What I envision emerging from this process, if properly done, would be a relatively compact, properly indexed set of true historical archives (I doubt it would exceed 500 cubic feet at the outside), plus a remainder of material which probably should be kept for some reason or other, but better indexed and better organized than now and purged of most dross and duplication.

8. Because this work could be done perfectly well at the GS-11 through 13 level, the total cost in salaries would be less than \$300,000. If this figure should appear an extravagance, let it be noted that:

a. We pay a good deal more than that annually already to people engaged in hovering over these files;

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b. It is a tiny fraction of the money gone and going into the Walnut retrieval system, which is not needed for historical archives and in any case has its input capacity over-taxed for the foreseeable future by CICE requirements;

c. Although it would be nice to hire a qualified archivist as a member of the team, the work could be done without increasing the Agency payroll at all by reassignments and adjustments of assignments;

d. The only practical alternative would be to have the same work done by better-paid senior officers, to the detriment of what presumably are more useful activities.

9. Therefore I recommend that:

a. Preferably at least four people, but certainly no fewer than two, be assigned as soon as possible to the job of screening, indexing and placing in proper archival form existing retired CS files--the assignments to be made with the understanding that they would be adjusted if the job proved either more or less onerous than anticipated; during their tours of duty, these people would be under the full supervision of the Historical Staff;

b. That a representative of the Historical Staff concert soon with appropriate officers of the CS to establish procedures so that proper historical archives will be maintained in the future; this will not be easy because there are many fingers in the pie, standards of compliance vary widely, and RID is not master in its own domain.

10. The foregoing is concerned only with the records research end of the CS historical problem. It is not the whole problem. Its solution is essential but not prerequisite. Other work can proceed concurrently. In a shortly following memorandum I shall round out this discussion, but it will be academic unless we can gain approval of substantially what I have proposed above.

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